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Personal Qualities and Habits of Life of  
Seneca as Shown in his Letters to Lucilius

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PERSONAL QUALITIES AND HABITS OF LIFE OF  
SENECA AS SHOWN IN HIS LETTERS TO LUCILIUS

BY

JESSIE FAY MILLER

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THESIS

FOR THE

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

IN

LATIN

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as Shown in his Letters to Lucilius

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

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# PERSONAL QUALITIES AND HABITS OF LIFE OF SENECA

AS

SHOWN IN HIS LETTERS TO LUCILIUS.<sup>x</sup>

## I. HABITS OF LIFE.

In this thesis it will be convenient to consider first, Seneca's habits of life, and secondly, his personal qualities. I shall take up his habits in the following order:- athletic exercises, travels, retirement from public life, habits of study and writing, use of food and luxuries, and intercourse with friends.

It is clear that Seneca was not typically Roman in his attitude toward athletic exercises. Both the old and the young men of Rome were in the habit of frequenting the Campus Martius for track and field sports and games of ball. Horace in his famous description of a journey to Brundisium shows that even literary men were athletic.<sup>1</sup> What was true of the city of Rome was true also of Italy and of all communities where the Roman Spirit had sway. Perhaps Seneca's disdain of athletic exercises was due to his feeble health. He says, "Cum me movi, lassus sum."<sup>2</sup> This was, of course, written in his old age.

He excludes wrestling from the number of the liberal arts, but places it, it seems to us, in very good company. "Non enim adducor ut in numerum liberalium artium pictores recipiam, non magis quam statuarios aut marmorarios aut ceteros luxuriae ministros. Aequae luctatores-----expello."<sup>3</sup> Who in modern times

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(1) Horace's Satires-1-5. (2) Epistle 83, -3. (3) Epistle 88, -18

<sup>x</sup> Quotations are from Hense's edition, Leipzig, 1898.





would think of classing wrestling and painting together?

The following, however, has a contemptuous ring. "Totam oleo ac luto constantem scientiam expello ex his studiis liberalibus: aut et unguentarios recipiam et coquos et ceteros voluptatibus nostris ingenia accomodantes sua."<sup>1</sup> To one who had never wrestled and who really or theoretically held the body in little esteem, this opinion was natural.

Like Paul, Seneca gives preference to the mind over the body. In the words of the former, "Bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things." Seneca says, "Hanc (animi) praecipue valetudinem cura, deinde et illam, (corporis), secundam: quae non magno tibi constabit, si volueris bene valere. Stulta est, enim, mi Lucili, et minime conveniens litterato viro occupatio exercendi lacertos et dilatandi cervicem ac latera firmandi. Cum tibi feliciter sagina cesserit et tori creverint, nec vires umquam opimi bovis nec pondus aequabis. Adice nunc quod maiore corporis sarcina animus eliditur et minus agilis est. Itaque quantum potes circumscribe corpus tuum et animo locum laxa. Multa sequuntur incommoda huic deditos curae: primum exercitationes, quarum labor spiritum exhaurit et inhabilem intentioni ac studiis acrioribus reddit. Deinde copia ciborum subtilitas impeditur."<sup>2</sup>

Though our author is desirous that activity of the body should not interfere with that of the mind, he admits the necessity of a certain amount of exercise. He says somewhat grudgingly, "Sunt exercitationes et faciles et breves, quae corpus et sine mora lassent et tempori parcant, cuius praecipua ratio habenda est:

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(1) Epistle 88,-18. (2) Epistle 15,-2, 3.



cursus et cum aliquo pondere manus motae et saltus vel ille qui corpus in altum levat vel ille qui in longum mittit vel ille, ut ita dicam, saliaris aut, ut contumeliosius dicam, fulloinus: cuiuslibet ex his elige usum rudem, facilem. Quicquid facies, cito redi a corpore ad animum."<sup>1</sup>

Seneca recommends riding in a litter because it shakes up the body and yet does not interfere with study.<sup>2</sup> This diversion may quite properly be listed among his athletic exercises, for he says, "A gestatione cum maxime venio non minus fatigatus quam si tantum ambulassem quantum sedi."<sup>2a</sup>

In the following passage he gives us a detailed account of his daily gymnastic exercises. "Unus mihi (progymnastes) sufficit.----Iam aliquem teneriorem quaero.----Sed iam vix illum adsequor currentem et intra paucissimos dies non potero.----Cito magnum intervallum fit inter duos in diversum euntes. Eodem tempore ille ascendit, ego descendo, nec ignoras, quanto ex his velocius alterum fiat.----Quomodo tamen hodiernum certamen novis cesserit quaeris? Quod raro cursoribus evenit, hieran fecimus. Ab hac fatigatione magis quam exercitatione in frigidam descendi.-----Ille tantus psychrolutes, qui kalendis Ianuariis euripum salutabam, qui anno novo quemadmodum legere, scribere, dicere aliquid, sic auspicabar in Virginem desilire, primum ad Tiberum transtuli castra, deinde ad hoc solium, quod, cum fortissimus sum et omnia bona fide fiunt, sol temperat."<sup>3</sup>

In his lack of enthusiasm for travel as well as for athletic exercises, Seneca was unlike the typical Roman of his day. From

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(1) Epistles, 15,-4. (2) Epistle 15,-6 (2a) Epistle 55,-1.

(3) Epistle 83,-4, 5.





Friedländer we learn that the extent of travel in the Roman Empire was greater than in Europe up to the nineteenth century. Journeys were taken for the sake of knowledge, history, art, nature, and health. Young men often went to the cities of Greece to be educated. The medical schools of highest repute were at Alexandria. Romans visited Greece, whence came a large part of their own culture, on account of its legendary and historical interest. Many temples held famous relics of great men, and also wonderful treasures of art. Though the art interest was less strong for the Romans than the interest of history; in Cicero's day Thespiæ was always visited for the sole purpose of seeing a Cupid of Praxiteles. Love of nature was intense, but was limited for the most part to pleasant scenes,---calm meadows with gentle streams, and peaceful sea shores. The celebrated and the rare in nature, such as the Nile with its summer floods, were also the object of pilgrimages. Physicians were wont to recommend a change of air. A sea-voyage to Egypt was considered good for consumptive patients. For these and other reasons, Greece, Asia Minor, and Egypt were thronged with Roman travellers.<sup>1</sup>

Even Seneca admits that there is some profit in journeys. "Itinera ista quæ segnitiam mihi excutiunt et valetudini meæ prodesse iudico et studiis.----Studio quare prosint, indicabo: a lectionibus recessi."<sup>2</sup> It is significant that he values travel because it betters his health and because it gives him time to resume his reading, and not for the sake of any stimulating effect of new, strange sights and experiences.

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(1) Roman Life and Manners under Early Empire ) Chaps. 6 & 7.

(2) Epistle 84, 1.



These "itineraria", moreover, were probably mere short rambles within the limits of Italy, for nowhere in his letters does Seneca speak of taking a long journey. Of some of these little trips he gives interesting accounts.

He condemned Baiae, the fashionable watering-place. "Tu istuc habes Aetnam;-----Nos, utcumque possumus, contenti sumus Bais. Quas postero die quam attigeram reliqui, locum ob hoc devitandum (cum habeat quasdam naturales dotes) quia illum sibi celebrandum luxuria desumpsit."<sup>1</sup>

Our author had an interesting little trip by sea. "Putavi tam pauca milia a Parthenope tua usque Puteolos surripi posse, quamvis dubio et impendente caelo.-----Cum iam eo processissem ut mea nihil interesset utrum irem an redirem, primum aequalitas illa quae me corruerat periit.---Coepi gubernatorem rogare ut me in aliquo litore exponeret. Aiebat ille aspera esse et importuosa nec quicquam se aeque in tempestate timere quam terram. Peius autem vexabar quam ut mihi periculum succurreret. Nausea enim me segnis haec et sine exitu torquebat.-----Institi itaque gubernatori et illum, vellet nollet, coegi peteret litus. Cuius ut viciniam attigimus-----mitto me in mare."<sup>2</sup> (He knew how to swim.)

This unfortunate experience induced Seneca to shun the sea, but he had almost as sorry a time when he returned from Baiae by land. "Cum a Bais deberem Neapolim repetere, facile credidi tempestatem esse, ne iterum navem experirer: et tantum luti tota via fuit ut possim videri nihilominus navigasse. Totum athletarum fatum mihi illo die perpetiendum fuit: a ceromate nos

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(1) Epistle 51,-1. (2) Epistle 53,-1,2,3.





hæphe excepit in crypta Neapolitana. Nihil illo carcere longius, nihil illis facibus obscurius, quæ nobis præstant non ut per tenebras vidamus, sed ut ipsas. Ceterum etiam si locus haberet lucem, pulvis auferret, in aperto quoque res gravis et molesta--quid illic, ubi in se volutatur et, cum sine ullo spiramento sit inclusus in ipsos a quibus excitatus est recidit? Duo incommoda inter se contraria simul pertulimus: eadem via, eodem die et luto et pulvere laboravimus."<sup>1</sup>

We have just a word about a trip to Pompei, where Seneca had been while a youth. "Post longum intervallum Pompeios tuos vidi. In conspectum adolescentiæ meæ reductus sum. Quicquid illic iuvenis feceram, videbar mihi facere adhuc posse et paulo ante fecisse."<sup>2</sup> Then, while we are eagerly waiting to hear what he did as a youth at Pompei, he launches out into moralizing.

At the beginning of one letter Seneca says, "In villa Scipionis iacens hæc scribo."<sup>3</sup> This villa was at Liternum.

In ill-health Seneca betook himself to his vine-yards at Nomentum. "In Nomentanum meum fugi, quid putas? Urbem? immo febrem et quidem subrepentem. Iam manum mihi iniecerat.----Pro-  
tinus itaque parari vehiculum iussi."<sup>4</sup> We are glad to learn that he gained immediate relief. "Ut primum gravitatem urbis excessi et illum odorem culinarum fumantium, quæ motæ quicquid pestiferi vaporis obruent, cum pulvere effundunt, protinus mutatam valitudinem sensi. Quantum deinde adiectum putas viribus, postquam vineas attigi? In pascuum emissus cibum meum invasi."<sup>5</sup>

There are other indications that Seneca was fond of his

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(1) Epistle 57, -1, 2. (2) Epistle 70, -1. (3) Epistle 86, -1.

(4) Epistle 104, -1. (5) Epistle 104, -6.



country home. In speaking of his country house he says, "inter manus meas crevit."<sup>1</sup> He tells us concerning some old plane-trees on his estate, "Ego illas posueram, ego illarum primum videram folium."<sup>2</sup> He appears to have had considerable knowledge of the methods of planting and transplanting trees and vines. In fact, with a sudden turn, he devotes the latter part of one of his moral essays to this subject.<sup>3</sup>

He probable made frequent excursions to his own or his friends' country homes, for among the things which cause the physical separation of companions, he mentions "suburbanas profectiones."<sup>4</sup>

Again and again Seneca speaks of the futility of travel to cure restlessness and discontent, which are the result of sickness of the mind. Philosophy is the only medicine for this. "Animum debes mutare, non caelum."<sup>5</sup> "Mutare te loca et aliunde alio transilire nolo."<sup>6</sup> "Bonam spem de te concipio: non discorris nec locorum mutationibus inquietaris. Aegri animi ista iactatio est.-----Nusquam est, qui ubique est. Vitam in peregrinatione exigentibus hoc evenit, ut multa hospitia habeant, nullas amicitias."<sup>7</sup> Seneca quotes Socrates: "Quid miraris nihil tibi peregrinationes prodesse, cum te circumferas? Premit te eadem causa quae expulit."<sup>8</sup> In Seneca's own words, "In irritum cedit ista iactatio. Quaeris quare te fuga ista non adiuvat? Tecum fugis. Onus animi deponendum est: non ante tibi ullus placebit locus."<sup>9</sup>

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(1) Epistle 12,-1. (2) Epistle 12,-2. (3) Epistle 86,-14-21.  
 (4) Epistle 55,-10. (5) Epistle 28,-1. (6) Epistle 69,-1.  
 (7) Epistle 2,-1,2. (8) Epistle 28,-2. (9) Epistle 28,-2.





Seneca's indifference to travel arose from the fact that the condition of the soul was his chief concern, and the soul's good could be furthered at home as well as abroad.

Not only did Seneca not travel, but at the time he wrote the letters to Lucilius he had ceased to take an active part in public life at home.

If we are to judge from his own words, his forced retirement gave him only a feeling of relief. He must have been tired of waiting for the expected blow to fall. The height which others envied was a precipice as well. "Ostendat ex constitutione vulgi beatos in illo invidioso fastigio suo trementes et adtonitos longeque aliam de se opinionem habentes quam ab aliis habetur. Nam quae aliis excelsa videntur, ipsis praerupta sunt."<sup>1</sup>

Seneca felt that a responsibility rested upon those engaged in public life. To Lucilius he said, "Tu nunc in provincia licet conternas ipse te, magnus es. Quid agas, quemadmodum cenes, quemadmodum dormias, quaeritur, scitur: eo tibi diligentius vivendum est."<sup>2</sup>

Yet he thought that where possible one should throw off the heavy burden of public affairs to take up the higher task of saving one's own soul and the souls of others through philosophy. "Subduc cervicem, iugo tritam."<sup>3</sup> "Ad hos te Stoicos voco, qui a re publica exclusi secesserunt ad colendam vitam."<sup>4</sup> Again he speaks of "ille vir sincerus ac purus, qui reliquit curiam et forum et omnem administrationem rei publicae, ut ad ampliora secederet." The life of the philosopher shines with a truer glory than that of the politician. "Erras, Lucili: ex hac vita ad illam

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(1) Epistle 94, -73. (2) Epistle 43, -3. (3) Ep. 19, -6. (4) Ep. 14-14



ascenditur. Quod interest inter splendorem et lucem, cum haec certam originem habeat ac suam, ille niteat alieno, hoc inter hanc vitam et illam: haec fulgore extrinsecus veniente percussa est, crassam illi statim umbram faciet quisquis obstiterit: illa suo lumine inlustris est."<sup>1</sup>

Seneca speaks of his own retirement from all temporal affairs with a deep realization of the importance of his literary work. "Secessi non tantum ab hominibus, sed a rebus, et inprimis a meis rebus: posterorum negotium ago."<sup>2</sup> "Quod ego tibi videor interim suadere, in hoc me recondidi et fores clusi, ut prodesse pluribus possem."<sup>3</sup> "Si haec cum posteris loquor, non videor tibi plus prodesse, quam cum ad vadimonium advocatus descenderem, aut tabulis testamenti anulum inprimerem, aut in senatu candidato vocem et manum commodarem? Mihi crede, qui nihil agere videntur, maiora agunt: humana divinaque simul tractant."<sup>4</sup>

The fruit of Seneca's seclusion was his literary work, and to this he devoted most of his time. We have various glimpses of his habits of study and writing.

It seems that he outlined his day carefully in order to avoid waste of time. "Ratio mihi constat inpensae. Non possum me dicere nihil (temporis) perdere, sed quid perdam et quare et quemadmodum dicam."<sup>5</sup>

His devotion to philosophy and letters was absolute. "Illi (philosophiae) vitam debeo et nihil illi minus debeo."<sup>6</sup> He says that little trips were of profit to his health and studies. "Cum pigrum me et neglegentem corporis litterarum amor faciat."<sup>7</sup>

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(1) Epistle 21, -2. (2) Epistle 8, -2. (3) Epistle 8, -1.

(4) Epistle 8, -6. (5) Epistle 1, -4. (6) Epistle 78, -3. (7) Ep. 84, 1.





"Totus (dies) inter stratum lectionemque divisus est."<sup>1</sup> "Nullus mihi per otium dies exit. Partem noctium studiis vindico."

This reminds one of the literary habits of the Elder Pliny, "Non vaco somno, sed succumbo et oculos vigilia fatigatos cadentesque in opere detineo."<sup>2</sup>

Seneca calmly pursued his studies in situations in which we should deem study impossible. His friends were obliged to use force to prevent him from working while he was yet too ill. "Hesternum diem divisi cum mala valetudine: antemeridianum illa sibi vindicavit, postmeridiano mihi cessit. Itaque lectione primum temptavi animum. Deinde cum hanc recepisset, plus illi imperare ausus sum, immo permittere: aliquid scripsi et quidem intentius quam soleo, dum cum materia difficili contendo et vinci nolo, donec intervenerunt amici, qui mihi vim adferrent et tamquam aegrum intemperantem coercerent."<sup>2a</sup>

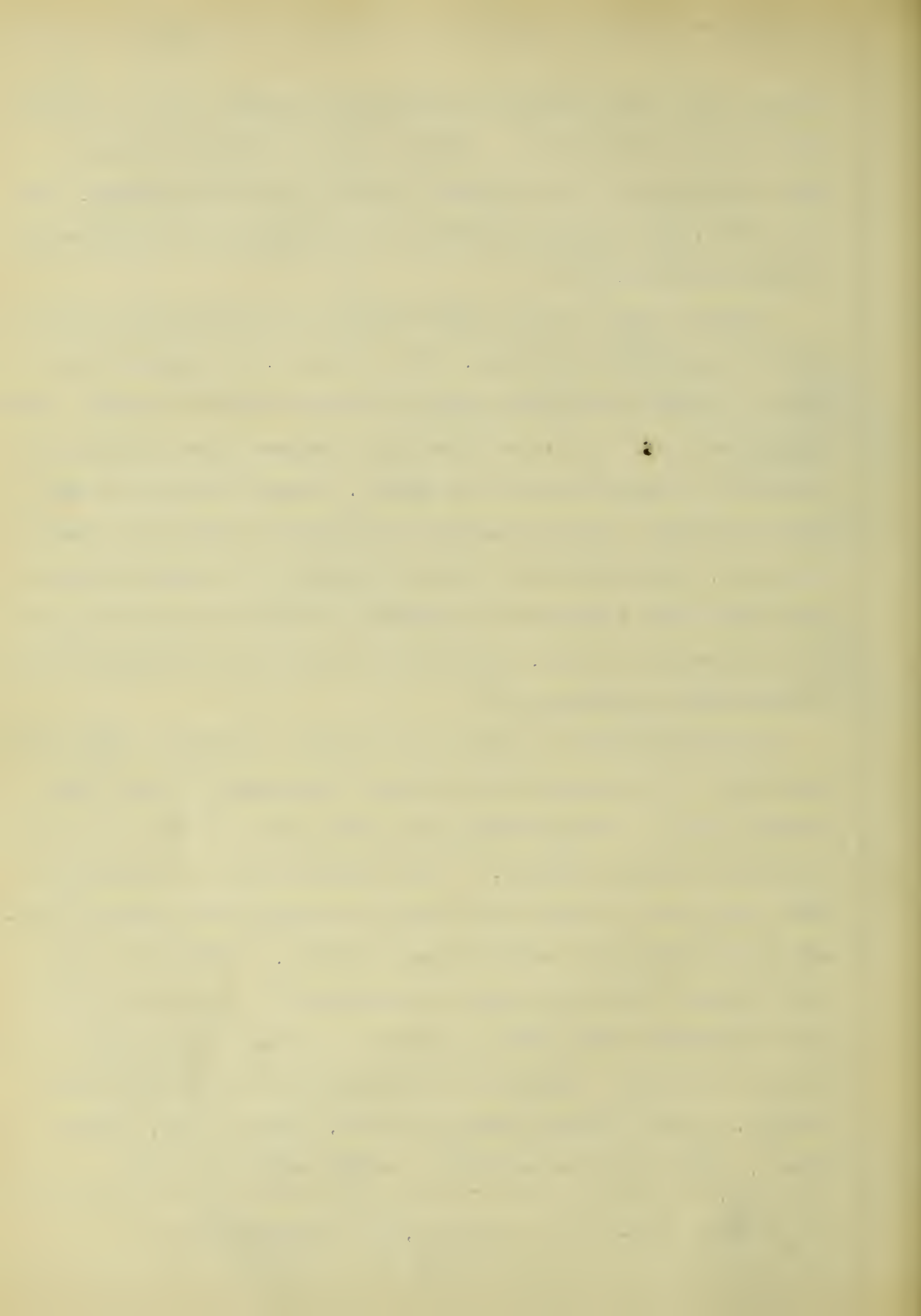
He was also able to work in the midst of external noise and confusion. "Undique me varius clamor circumsonat: supra ipsum balneum habito. Propone nunc tibi omnia genera vocum quae in odium possunt aures adducere."<sup>3</sup> The various noises are described. "Sed iam me sic ad omnia ista duravi ut audire vel pausarium possim voce acerbissima remigibus modos dantem. Animum enim cogo sibi intentum esse nec avocari ad externa."<sup>4</sup> He could so shut out the outside world that he was able to study while riding in a litter or walking. "Gestatio et corpus concutit et studio non officit. Possis legere, possis dictare, possis loqui, possis audire, quorum nihil ne ambulatio quidem vetat fieri."<sup>5</sup>

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(1) Epistle 83, -3. (2) Epistle 8, -1. (2a) Epistle 65, -1.

(3) Epistle 56, -1. (4) Epistle 56, -5. (5) Epistle 15, -6.





However, though Seneca was able to endure disturbances, he preferred peace and quiet. After he had proved his self-control by concentrating his mind on study in the room above the bath, he changed his lodgings. "Non aliquando commodius est et carere convicio? Fateor. Itaque ego ex hoc loco migrabo. Experiri et exercere me volui. Quid necesse est diutius torqueri?"<sup>1</sup> In one passage he expresses his delight that all troublesome people have gone to the games, leaving him free from interruption. "Nemo irrumpet, nemo cogitationem meam impediet quae hac ipsa fiducia procedit audacius. Non crepabit subinde ostium, non allevabitur velum: licebit uno actu vadere, quod magis necessarium est per se eunti et suam sequenti viam."<sup>2</sup>

He advises a due balance between reading and writing. "Nec scribere tantum nec tantum legere debemus: altera res contristabit vires et exhauriet, (de stilo dico), altera solvet ac diluet. Invicem huc et illo commeandum est et alterum altero temperandum, ut quicquid lectione collectum est stilus redigat in corpus."<sup>3</sup> This may be compared to Quintilian's advice to authors.

Seneca realizes that it is not the amount but the quality of reading which counts. "Non refert quam multos sed quam bonos habeas: lectio certa prodest, varia delectat."<sup>4</sup> It is not well to skim many books for the sake of novelty: the books which one has tested are the best. "Fastidientis stomachi est multa degustare; quae ubi varia sunt et diversa, inquinant, non alunt. Probatos itaque semper lege, et si quando ad alios divertit libuerit, ad priores redi.----Cum multa percurrearis, unum excerpe, quod

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(1) Epistle 56, -15. (2) Epistle 80, -1. (3) Epistle 84, -2.

(4) Epistle 45, -1.



illo die concoquas. Hoc ipse quoque facio; ex pluribus, quae legi, aliquid adprehendo."<sup>1</sup> Clearly reading is profitless if one carries nothing away. The result of our author's habit of assimilation can be seen in the many poetical quotations which he introduces in the letters. For instance, I have noticed sixty-three quotations from Vergil alone.

Old age did not prevent Seneca from attending philosophical lectures and discussions. "Philosophum audio et quidem quintum iam diem habeo, ex quo in scholam eo et ab octava disputantem audio.--- In theatrum senex ibo et in circum deferar et nullum par sine me depugnabit: ad philosophum ire erubescam?----Tamdiu discendum est, quemadmodum vivas, quamdiu vivas."<sup>2</sup>

Seneca spent much time in philosophical reflection. "Mihi certe multum auferre temporis solet contemplatio ipsa sapientiae."<sup>3</sup>

In his use of food and luxuries, our philosopher followed the golden mean. We must not set our hearts on luxuries, lest fear of losing them make us unhappy. Moreover, they are contrary to nature, and often positively unhealthful. But in our enthusiasm we are not to go too far in the other direction. We are to use plain food, not bad food. To torture our bodies needlessly is a crime against nature.

In his youth Seneca had been induced by Attalus to become a vegetarian. "Abstinere animalibus coepi, et anno peracto non tantum facilis erat, sed dulcis."<sup>4</sup> In spite of the pleasure which he says he took in vegetarianism, Seneca gave it up rather readily at his father's request when Tiberius, who was a staunch

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(1) Epistle 2, -4, 5.

(3) Epistle 64, -6.

(2) Epistle 76, -1.

(4) Epistle 108, -22.





supporter of the state religion, began to suspect that there was some connection between refusal of meat and foreign superstitions.<sup>1</sup> Though he began again to eat meat, he continued throughout his life to abstain from some of the foods which he gave up at this time; the others he ate only in moderate amounts. "Inde ostreis boletisque in omnem vitam renuntiatum est.----Inde in omnem vitam unguento abstinemus, quoniam optimus odor in corpore est nullus. Inde vino carens stomachus. Inde in omnem vitam balneum fugimus: decoquere corpus atque exinanire sudoribus inutile simul delicatumque credidimus. Cetera proiecta redierunt, ita tamen ut quorum abstinentiam interrumpi, modum servem et quidem abstinentiae proximiores, nescio an difficiliores, quoniam quidem absciduntur facilius animo quam temperantur."<sup>1a</sup> He does not seem to realize that this does not harmonize with his doctrine of the golden mean.

He is especially convinced of the injurious effects of mushrooms, oysters, summer snow, extremely hot food, and rich fish sauce. "Quid? Tu illos boletos, voluptarium venenum, nihil occulti operis iudicas facere, etiam si praesentanei non fuerunt? Quid? Tu illam aestivam nivem non putas callum iocineribus obducere? Quid? Illa ostrea inertissimam carnem caeno saginatam, nihil existimas limosae gravitatis inferre? Quid? Illud sociorum garum, pretiosam malorum piscium saniem, non credis urere salsa tabe praecordia? Quid? Illa purulenta et quae tantum non ex ipso igne in os transferuntur, iudicas sine noxa in ipsis visceribus extinguere?"<sup>2</sup>

Seneca gives us an account of his own plain living. He has been telling of his exercise and cold bath. "Panis deinde siccus

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(1) Epistle 108, -22. (1a) Epistle 108-15, 16 (2) Epistle 95, -25.



et sine mensa prandium, post quod non sunt lavandae manus. Dormio minimum.---Brevissimo somno utor et quasi interjungo. Satis est mihi vigilare desisse."<sup>1</sup> Insomnia cannot claim a modern origin.

He gives us the following advice. "Hanc ergo sanam ac salubrem formam vitae tenete, ut corpori tantum indulgeatis, quantum bonae valitudini satis est."<sup>2</sup> His conduct, however, does not seem to harmonize with his theory.

He does not believe in useless and unnatural mortification of the flesh. "Hoc contra naturam est, torquere corpus suum et faciles odisse munditias et squalorem appetere et cibis non tantum vilibus uti, sed taetris et horridis. Quemadmodum desiderare delicatas res luxuriae est, ita usitatas et non magno parabiles fugere, dementiae. Frugalitatem exigit philosophia, non poenam: potest autem esse non incomperta frugalitas."<sup>3</sup>

Nature is the infallible guide; that which is not in accordance with it is wrong. "Non videntur tibi contra naturam vivere qui commutant cum feminis vestem? Non vivunt contra naturam qui spectant, ut pueritia splendeat tempore alieno?---Non vivunt contra naturam qui hieme concupiscunt rosam fomentoque aquarum calentium et calorum apta mutatione brumalium, florem vernum, exprimunt? Non vivunt contra naturam qui pomaria in summis turribus serunt? Quorum silvae in tectis domuum ac fastigiis nutant, inde ortis radicibus, quo improbe cacumina egissent? Non vivunt contra naturam qui fundamenta thermarum in mari iaciunt et delicate natare ipsi sibi non videntur, nisi calentia stagna fluctu ac tempestate feriantur?"<sup>4</sup> These luxuries seem to us harmless enough

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(1) Epistle 83,-6. (2) Epistle 8,-5. (3) Epistle 5,-4,5.

(4) Epistle 122,-7,8,9.





but Seneca condemns them theoretically on the score of their artificiality. It may well be questioned, however, whether a bouquet of roses in the winter would not have pleased him and whether he had real objections to a home whose foundations reached out from the shore. He reminds us of Horace.

We have a description of a little trip, conducted in the simplest fashion. "Cum paucissimis servis, quos unum capere vehiculum potuit, sine ullis rebus nisi quae corpore nostro continebantur, ego et Maximus meus biduum iam beatissimum agimus. Culcita in terra iacet, ego in culcita. Ex duabus paenulis altera stragulum, altera opertorium facta est. De prandio nihil detrahi potuit paratum fuit non magis hora, nusquam sine caricis, numquam sine pugillaribus: illae, si panem habeo, pro pulmentario sunt, si non habeo, pro pane.---Vehiculum, in quod inpositus sum, rusticum est; mulae vivere se ambulando testantur; mulio excalceatus, non propter aestatem."<sup>1</sup> Seneca, however, does not seem accustomed to such extreme simplicity, for he admits that when he met a party of gilded youths he had to blush at the meanness of his equipment. Clearly he was not completely cured of his malady, as he in fact confesses in another passage. "Non sum tam improbus ut curationes aeger obeam, sed, tamquam in eodem valetudinario iaceam, de communi tecum malo colloquor et remedia communico."<sup>2</sup>

Some luxury is permitted us, if it is luxury which is in accordance with nature, but we must not become attached to it overmuch. Constant fear of loss disturbs the calmness of mind of those to whom luxury is a necessity. In order that poverty may lose its terrors for us, we should rehearse for several days the

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(1) Epistle 87,-2,3,4. (2) Epistle 27,-1.





life of the poor man. "Interponas aliquot dies, quibus contentus minimo ac vilissimo cibo, dura atque horrida veste, dicas tibi: 'hoc est quod timebatur?' In ipsa securitate animus ad difficilia se praeparet et contra iniurias fortunae inter beneficia firmetur."<sup>1</sup>

In what "Living according to nature" consisted it is outside the purpose of this inquiry to determine, but it may be said in passing that Seneca seems to have no very definite ideas beyond those embodied in the term "moderation." He exhorts Lucilius, a rich man, to follow this method of life, but he evidently has no thought of the life of the simple rustic; he wishes to follow this life himself, and his wealth is no insuperable obstacle, though perhaps a hindrance. In short, simplicity of life and moderation in all things are meant, and they may be considered to be the outcome both of his Stoic beliefs and of his protest against the artificial nature of the society in which he lived.

Among the glimpses---which we catch of Seneca's daily life, none are more pleasant than those which relate to his intercourse with friends. Theoretically, he justifies friendship on the ground of its naturalness. "Ad amicitiam fert illum nulla utilitas, sed naturalis inritatio. Nam ut aliarum nobis rerum innata dulcedo est, sic amicitiae. Quomodo solitudinis odium est et adpetitio societatis, quomodo hominem homini natura conciliat, sic inest huic quoque rei stimulus, qui nos amicitiarum adpetentes faciat."<sup>2</sup> Theoretically also, even friends must not be indispensable to us. "Hos cupit habere quam plurimos, non ut beate vivat. Vivet enim etiam sine amicis beate."<sup>3</sup> According to the

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(1) Epistle 18, -5. (2) Epistle 9, -17. (3) Epistle 9, -15.



Stoic doctrine, the "summum bonum" is not to be found outside ourselves, else it would be subject to the whims of fortune. "Incipit fortunae isse subiectum, si quam partem sui foris quaerit."<sup>1</sup> In another essay there is a contradictory passage, in which we wonder if the author does not come nearer to the truth in regard to his own needs. "Sapiens non potest in habitu mentis suae stare, nisi amicos aliquos similes sui admisit, cum quibus virtutes suas communicet.-----Itaque prodest, qui virtutes alicuius paris sui amat amandasque invicem praestat."<sup>2</sup>

In fact, our philosopher seems to have been very affectionate. In his younger days, he made a pet and playmate of his steward's son. "Ego sum Felicio, cui solebas sigillaria adferre. Ego sum Philositi villici filius, delciciolum tuum."<sup>3</sup>

Seneca gives us an instance of his own hospitality. "Intervenerunt quidam amici, propter quos maior fumus fieret, non hic, qui erumpere ex lautorum culinis et terrere vigiles solet, sed hic modicus, qui hospites venisse significet. Varius nobis fuit sermo, ut in convivio, nullam rem usque ad exitum adducens, sed aliunde alio transiliens."<sup>4</sup>

His friends came to aid him when he was sick. "Multum mihi contulerunt ad bonam valetudinem amici, quorum adhortationibus, vigiliis, sermonibus allevabar. Nihil aequae----aegrum reficit atque adjuvat quam amicorum adfectus."<sup>5</sup> In a passage quoted under "Habits of Study and Writing", we are told that his friends sometimes brought force to bear upon him when he tried to study while ill.<sup>6</sup>

(1) Epistle 9, -15. (2) Epistle 109, -9, 10. (3) Epistle 12, -3.

(4) Epistle 64, -1, 2. (5) Epistle 78, -4. (6) Epistle 65, -1.





He believed in relations of complete confidence between friends. "Si aliquem amicum existimas, cui non tantundem credis quantum tibi, vehementer erras et non satis nosti vim verae amicitiae.----Toto illum pectore admitte: tam audaciter cum illo loquere quam tecum."<sup>1</sup>

Seneca enjoyed close intercourse with absent friends through letters and through a sort of communion of spirit. "Si imagines nobis amicorum absentium iucundae sunt, quanto iucundiores sunt litterae?"<sup>2</sup> "Si quando intervenerunt epistulae tuae, tecum esse mihi videor."<sup>3</sup> But letters are subject to the caprices of fortune. Seneca attained the Stoic ideal, and the ideal of friends of all ages, when he so possessed his friend in spirit that physical separation and even death could not take him away. "Conversari cum amicis absentibus licet, et quotiens velis, quamdiu velis.----Video te: cum maxime audio, Adeo tecum sunt, ut dubitem, an incipiam non epistulas, sed codicellos tibi scribere."<sup>4</sup> He sums it all up in a few words. "Mecum enim semper es."<sup>5</sup>

To us, who are accustomed to think that we should mourn in solitude for dead friends, there is a strange sound in the advice to seek other friends immediately to fill the vacant places. "(Sapiens) amissum aequo animo fert.----Quomodo si perdiderit Phidias statuam protinus alteram faciet: sic hic faciendarum amicitiarum artifex substituet alium in locum amissi."<sup>6</sup> "Si alios amicos non habemus, maiorem iniuriam ipsi nobis fecimus quam a fortuna accepimus."<sup>7</sup> But this is not hard heartedness. It comes from the fact that Seneca's view of friendship is the opportunity

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(1) Epistle 3,-2. (2) Epistle 40,-1. (3) Epistle 67,-2.

(4) Epistle 55,-8,11. (5) Epistle 64,-1. (6) Epistle 9,-5.

(7) Epistle 63,-10.



to bestow favors. He is all untouched by mercenary motives. He enjoys being a friend. "Habet---magnam voluptatem---initium et comparatio novae (amicitiae)." <sup>1</sup> "In quid amicum paro? Ut habeam pro quo mori possim.---Ista---negotiatio est, non amicitia, quae ad commodum accedit, quae quid consecutura sit spectat." <sup>2</sup> He gives us as his idea of true friendship that "quam non spes, non timor, non utilitatis suae cura divellit, cum qua homines moriuntur, pro qua moriuntur." <sup>3</sup>

(1) Epistle 9, -6. (2) Epistle 9, -10. (3) Epistle 6, -2.



## II. PERSONAL QUALITIES.

Seneca's personal qualities will be taken up in the following order:- independence in thought, sense of humor, missionary zeal, tendency to moralize, belief in mankind, sympathetic insight, loyalty to the existing order, affection for family, attitude toward God, toward happiness; self-control, courage, humanity, social instinct, humility, and sincerity.

In considering Seneca's personal qualities as revealed in his letters, one of the first questions which arises is, to what extent is he independent? Does he slavishly follow the doctrines of his Stoic predecessors, ascribing to them a monopoly on truth?

He has great respect for the Stoic philosophers who have gone before him. "Ego vero illos veneror et tantis nominibus semper adsurgo."<sup>1</sup> "Suspiciendi sunt et ritu decorum colendi."<sup>2</sup> "Veneror itaque inventa sapientiae inventoresque; adire tamquam multorum hereditatem iuvat."<sup>3</sup> But we are to enrich this heritage. "Maior ista hereditas a me ad posteros transeat."<sup>4</sup> It will be capable of still further enrichment through all the ages. "Multum adhuc restat operis multumque restabit, nec ulli nato post mille saecula praecludetur occasio aliquid adhuc adiciendi."<sup>5</sup> He says in another passage, "Nondum (veritas) est occupata."<sup>6</sup> It is an indication of breadth of mind that he does not believe that the whole of truth is comprised in the philosophy of the great Stoics, but he goes yet farther, and looks for a portion of that truth in the words of the founder of the rival school. Often the little golden text or motto which he gives Lucilius is a quotation from Epicurus. His apology

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(1) Epistle 64, -10. (2) Epistle 64, -9. (3) Epistle 64, -7.

(4) Epistle 64, -7. (5) Epistle 64, -7. (6) Epistle 33, -11.





is, "Quod verum est, meum est."<sup>1</sup> In short, we find in Seneca veneration for predecessors happily combined with independence of judgment. In the following sentence he gives us a summary of his own attitude. "Non ergo sequor priores? Facio, sed permitto mihi et invenire aliquid et mutare et relinquere."<sup>2</sup> "Non me cuiquam emancipavi, nullius nomen fero. Multum magnorum viroum iudicio credo, aliquid et meo vindico."<sup>3</sup>

Though the epistles contain nothing which indicates that Seneca had a keen appreciation of the ludicrous, they do contain indications that he did not lack a sense of humor. He could enjoy a joke even when it was on himself. He tells us with evident relish of an occasion upon which he was made to realize his age. When he complained about the condition of his villa, the steward made the excuse that the building was old. "Haec villa inter manus meas crevit"<sup>4</sup>, says the philosopher parenthetically. Quite provoked by the steward's answer, he hastened to find fault with the plane-trees, only to meet with the same apology. He adds, "Quod intra nos sit, ego illas posueram."<sup>5</sup> A climax is reached when he makes inquiry concerning a toothless, decrepit old man, and is told that he is his old playmate<sup>6</sup>. In relating how he was afflicted with seasickness during a little trip, and was obliged to swim ashore, he ascertains that it was seasickness which made Ulysses so slow in reaching his destination. "Et ego quocumque navigare debuero, vicensimo anno perveniam."<sup>7</sup> On the way to Naples, he says, "Tantum luti tota via fuit ut possim videri nihilominus navigasse. Totum athletarum fatum mihi illo die perpetiendum fuit: a ceromate nos

(1) Epistle 12, -11. (2) Epistle 80, -1. (3) Epistle 45, -4.  
 (4) Epistle 12, -1. (5) Epistle 12, -2. (6) Epistle 12, -3.  
 (7) Epistle 53, -4.



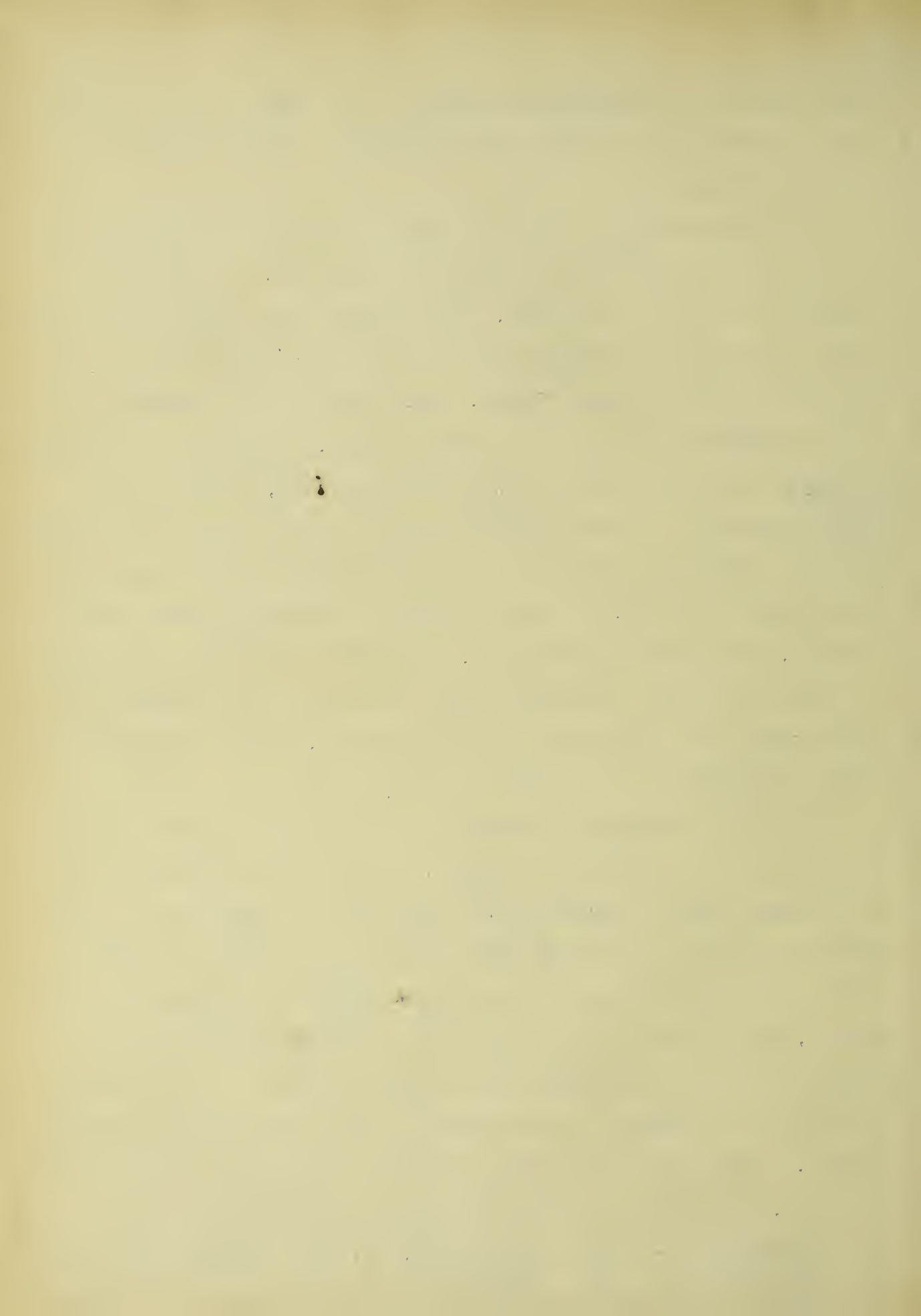
haphe exceptit in crypta Neapolitana." He tells us that he once made an excursion with very poor equipment: "Mulae vivere se ambulando testantur."<sup>1</sup>

The pleasant humor directed against himself is supplemented by a keen wit turned upon the foibles of others. He quotes with disgust the foolish syllogism, "Mus syllaba est. Mus autem caseum rodit: syllaba ergo caseum rodit," and says sarcastically, "Putane nunc me istuc non posse solvere. Quod mihi ex ista inscientia periculum inminet? ----Sine dubio verendum est, ne quando in muscipulo syllabas capiam aut ne quando, si negligentior fuero, caseum liber comedat."<sup>2</sup> Other examples of his wit are brief and pointed. He never passes the villa of the slothful Vatia without thinking, "Vatia hic situs est."<sup>3</sup> "Annum feminis ad lugendum constituere maiores, non ut tam diu lugerent, sed ne diutius."<sup>4</sup> The following is especially good: "Innumerabiles esse morbos non miraberis: cocos numera."<sup>5</sup> At least in limited degree, we may claim for Seneca both humor of situation and biting wit.

The Epistles furnish abundant proof of his missionary zeal. He does not take philosophy lightly. To him the philosopher is the "humani generis paedagogus!"<sup>6</sup> This may be the reason why the humorous passages in the epistles are so few. "Non est iocandi locus: ad miseros advocatus es. Opem laturum te naufragis, captis, aegris, egentibus---pollicitus es."<sup>7</sup> Of Marcellinus he says, "Nondum despero; etiam nunc servari potest, sed si cito illi manus porrigitur.----Moveat ille mihi risum, ego fortasse illi lacrimas movebo.---Vitia eius etiam si non excidero, inhibebo."<sup>8</sup> He tells Lucilius, "Mea gloria erit, si te istinc, ubi sine spe exeundi

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(1) Epistle 87, -4. (2) Epistle 48, -6. (3) Epistle 55, -4.  
 (4) Epistle 63, -13. (5) Epistle 92, -25. (6) Epistle 89, -13.  
 (7) Epistle 48, -8. (8) Epistle 29, -7.





fluctuaris, extraxero."<sup>1</sup> The diseases of the soul are very real. "Curare debes morbum veterem, graven, publicum. Tantum negotii habes, quantum in pestilentia medicus."<sup>2</sup> In his ardor he resembles the apostles of the early church. Dill calls him the "Pagan monk". The assertion, "Nobis militandum est" reminds us especially of the "Soldiers of the Cross".

Seneca's missionary zeal is probably the cause of his tendency to moralize. This tendency manifests itself sometimes under rather unusual circumstances. After his experience of seasickness, "Ut primum stomachum collegi, hoc coepi mecum cogitare." He indulges in moral reflection during attacks of asthma. "In ipsa suffocatione non desii cogitationibus laetis ac fortibus acquiescere."<sup>3</sup> As soon as he recovered from his fright in a tunnel, "Mecum loqui coepi, quam inepte quaedam magis aut minus timeamus,, cum omnium idem finis esset."<sup>4</sup> He is continually on the watch for something which will furnish him with a lesson. "Ex consuetudine me circumspicere coepi, ut aliquid illic invenirem, quod mihi posset bono esse, et derexi oculos in villam."<sup>5</sup>

Theoretically, Seneca seems to believe that all men are capable of imbibing philosophy. "(Philosophiae) scientiam nulli (di) dederunt, facultatem omnibus."<sup>6</sup> "Non potest cuiquam idem semper placere nisi rectum."<sup>7</sup> This belief in the possibilities of mankind does not blind him to actual conditions; his comments show that he is free from illusions. "Vix quemquam invenies, qui possit aperto ostio vivere."<sup>8</sup> "Quereris incidisse te in hominem ingratum: si hoc nunc primum, age aut fortunae aut diligentiae tuae gratias."<sup>9</sup>

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(1) Epistle 29, -8. (2) Epistle 75, -7. (3) Epistle 54, -3.  
 (4) Epistle 57, -6. (5) Epistle 55, -3. (6) Epistle 90, -1.  
 (7) Epistle 20, -5. (8) Epistle 43, -4. (9) Epistle 81, -1.



"Amanda paupertas, quod a quibus ameris ostendet."<sup>1</sup> "Est officium sapientiae ut verbis opera concordent.----'Quis hoc preestabit?' Pauci, aliqui tamen."<sup>2</sup>

Though his philosophical theory embraces all men, he shows contempt for the mob. He quotes Epicurus: "Nunquam volui populo placere."<sup>3</sup> He says in his own words, "Ad optima, calcatis popularibus bonis, ibas."<sup>4</sup> "Nemo referre gratiam scit nisi sapiens."<sup>5</sup> "Ab opinionibus vulgi secede paulisper."<sup>6</sup>

His appeal is directed chiefly to the upper classes,---to the men weary with indulgence with whom he had been associated in the life at Nero's court. His sympathetic insight in his dealings with them is remarkable. Dill suggests that his vivid portrayals are hints of his own past excesses, but I know of no evidence to support this view.<sup>7</sup> "Voluptates ipsas, quae te morantur ac retinent, consumpsisti. Nulla tibi nova est, nulla non iam odiosa ipsa satietate: quis sit vini, quis mulsi sapor, scis. Nihil interest. ---Nihil tibi luxuria tua in futuros annos intactum reservavit."<sup>8</sup> "Ipsae voluptates in tormenta vertuntur, epulae crudelitatem adferunt, ebrietates nervorum torporem tremoremque, libidines pedum, manuum, articulorum omnium depravationes."<sup>9</sup> "Homines vitia sua et amant simul et oderunt."<sup>10</sup> Whether he gained his knowledge from observation or experience, he understood and sympathized with his patients.

Seneca condemns the corrupt society of the time, but expresses loyalty to the existing political order. He speaks wistfully of the long-past golden age, "antequam societatem avaritia distraxit"<sup>11</sup>

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(1) Epistle 20, -7. (2) Epistle 20, -2. (3) Epistle 29, -10.  
 (3) Epistle 31, -1. (4) Epistle 81, -13. (6) Epistle 67, -12.  
 (7) Dill, "Roman Society," p. 298. (8) Epistle 77, -16. (9) Epistle 24, -10. (10) Epistle 112, -4. (11) Epistle 90, -3.





He says, however, "Errare mihi videntur qui existimant philosophiae fideliter deditos contumaces esse ac refractarios, contemptores magistratum aut regum eorum, per quos publica administrantur. ---Nullis enim plus praestant quam quibus frui tranquillo otio licet."<sup>1</sup> "Agit gubernatori suo gratias."<sup>2</sup>

Seneca gives us very little information in the Epistles concerning his affection for his family. He says that on one occasion the old age of his "patris indulgentissimi"<sup>3</sup> kept him from committing suicide. He rebukes the act of mourning for a son as if he were a friend. "Molliter tu fers mortem filii: quid faceres, si amicum perdidisses?"<sup>4</sup> The death of a son is not "dolor", but "morsus". Seneca had two children who died young and I have found no reference to them in his letters. He speaks in very endearing terms of his wife, Paulina. "Nam cum spiritum illius in deo verti, incipio, ut illi consulam, mihi consulere."<sup>5</sup> "Quid enim iucundius quam uxori tam carum esse, ut propter hoc tibi carior fias?"<sup>6</sup>

His attitude toward God is modern in many respects. "Deus ad homines venit: nulla sine deo mens bona est."<sup>7</sup> "Nihil deo clusum est."<sup>8</sup> We usually reverse the following instructions. "Sic loquere cum deo, tanquam homines audiant."<sup>9</sup>

Philosophy commands obedience to God, and obedience to God demands patience. "(Philosophia) adhortabatur, ut deo libenter pareamus;---haec docebit, ut deum sequaris, feras casum."<sup>10</sup> "Quaecumque fiunt debuisse fieri patet. Optimum est pati quod emendare non possis."<sup>11</sup> "Omnia fortiter excipienda, quae nobis mundi necessitas imperat."<sup>12</sup>

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(1) Epistle 73, -1. (2) Epistle 73, -9. (3) Epistle 78, -2.  
 (4) Epistle 99, -2. (5) Epistle 104, -2. (6) Epistle 104, -5.  
 (7) Epistle 73, -10. (8) Epistle 83, -1. (9) Epistle 10, -5.  
 (10) Epistle 16, -5. (11) Epistle 107, -9. (12) Epistle 94, -7.





In answer to the question, "Was Seneca a happy man?" we can only say that he exhorts Lucilius to be joyful. "Hoc ante omnia fac, mi Lucili: disce gaudere.---Nolo tibi unquam deesse laetitiam.--- Verum gaudium res severa est. --- (Subit) ex bona conscientia, ex honestis consiliis, ex rectis actionibus, ex contemptu fortuitorum, ex placido vitae et continuo tenore unam prementis viam."<sup>1</sup>

He was a man of self-control, although in this respect he did not measure up to the Stoic ideal. He despised uncontrolled anger, intoxication, and intemperance in the use of food. "Ingentis irae exitus furor est."<sup>2</sup> "Dic---nihil aliud esse ebrietatem quam voluntariam insaniam."<sup>3</sup> "Hos itaque, 'ventri oboedientes' anamalium loco numeremus, non hominum, quosdam ne anamalium quidem, sed mortuorum."<sup>4</sup> He steeled himself to such a degree that the clamor of the circus games<sup>5</sup> and the noise of the public bath beneath his lodgings did not interrupt his thought processes.<sup>6</sup> Yet when he met an elegant company upon the road at one time, he blushed unwillingly at his mean equipment.<sup>7</sup> We do not like him the less for a fact which he confesses with shame: "Serenum tam immodice flevi ut inter exempla sim eorum quos dolor vicit."<sup>8</sup>

Seneca's letters to Lucilius show both courage and cowardice, but the prevailing tone is brave. His fear of Nero is natural. After naming the causes of fear, he says, "Ex his omnibus nihil nos magis concutit, quam quod ex aliena potentia impendent. Magno enim strepitu et tumultu venit. Naturalia mala quae rettuli, inopia atque morbus, silentio subeunt nec oculis nec auribus quicquam terroris incutiunt: ingens alterius mali pompa est. Ferrum circa se et ignes

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(1) Epistle 23, -5-7. (2) Epistle 18, -15. (3) Epistle 83, -18.  
 (4) Epistle 60, -4. (5) Epistle 83, -7. (6) Epistle 56, -5.  
 (7) Epistle 87, -4. (8) Epistle 63, -14.



habet et catenas et turbam ferarum, quam in viscera inmittat humana. Cogita hoc loco carcerem et cruces et eculeos et uncum et adactum per medium hominem, qui per os emergeret, stipitem et distracta in diversum actis curribus membra, illam tunicam alimentis ignium et inlitam et textam, et quicquid aliud praeter haec commenta saevitia est."<sup>1</sup> We do not object so much to the fear itself as to the way in which he tries to hide his cowardice under the name of philosophy. "Sapiens numquam potentium iras provocabit.--- Nocituram potentiam vitat, hoc primum carens, ne vitare videatur."<sup>2</sup> In striking contrast to this he says, "Non trepidabo ad extrema.--- Eicior quidem, sed tamquam exeam."<sup>3</sup> "Mors timenda non est."<sup>4</sup> He refrained from committing suicide for his father's sake. "Itaque imperavi mihi ut viverem. Aliquando enim et vivere fortiter facere est."<sup>5</sup> "Quid mihi flagella et eculeos magno apparatu explicas?--- Levis es, si ferre possum, brevis es, si ferre non possum."<sup>6</sup> His conduct in exile also showed a mixture of courage and cowardice. He wrote epigrams full of rather cowardly complaint. I quote one in part.

("Ad Corsicam", II)

"Barbara praeruptis inclusa est Corsica saxis,

Horrida, desertis undique vasta locis.

Non panis, non haustus aquae, non ultimus ignis:

Hic sola haec duo sunt, exsul et exsilium."

On the other hand, "Ad Helviam Matrem de Consolatione" is brave and noble. He begins, "Videbar depositurus omnia incommoda, cum lacrimas tuas, etiamsi suppressere non potuissem, interim certe abstersissem." Seneca, like most men, was not absolutely fearless: but as

(1) Epistle 14, -4-5. (2) Epistle 14, -7,8. (3) Epistle 54, -7.

(4) Epistle 24, -11. (5) Epistle 78, -2. (6) Epistle 24, -14.





he had far more reason for fear than do most men, we may say that his cowardice was outweighed by his courage.

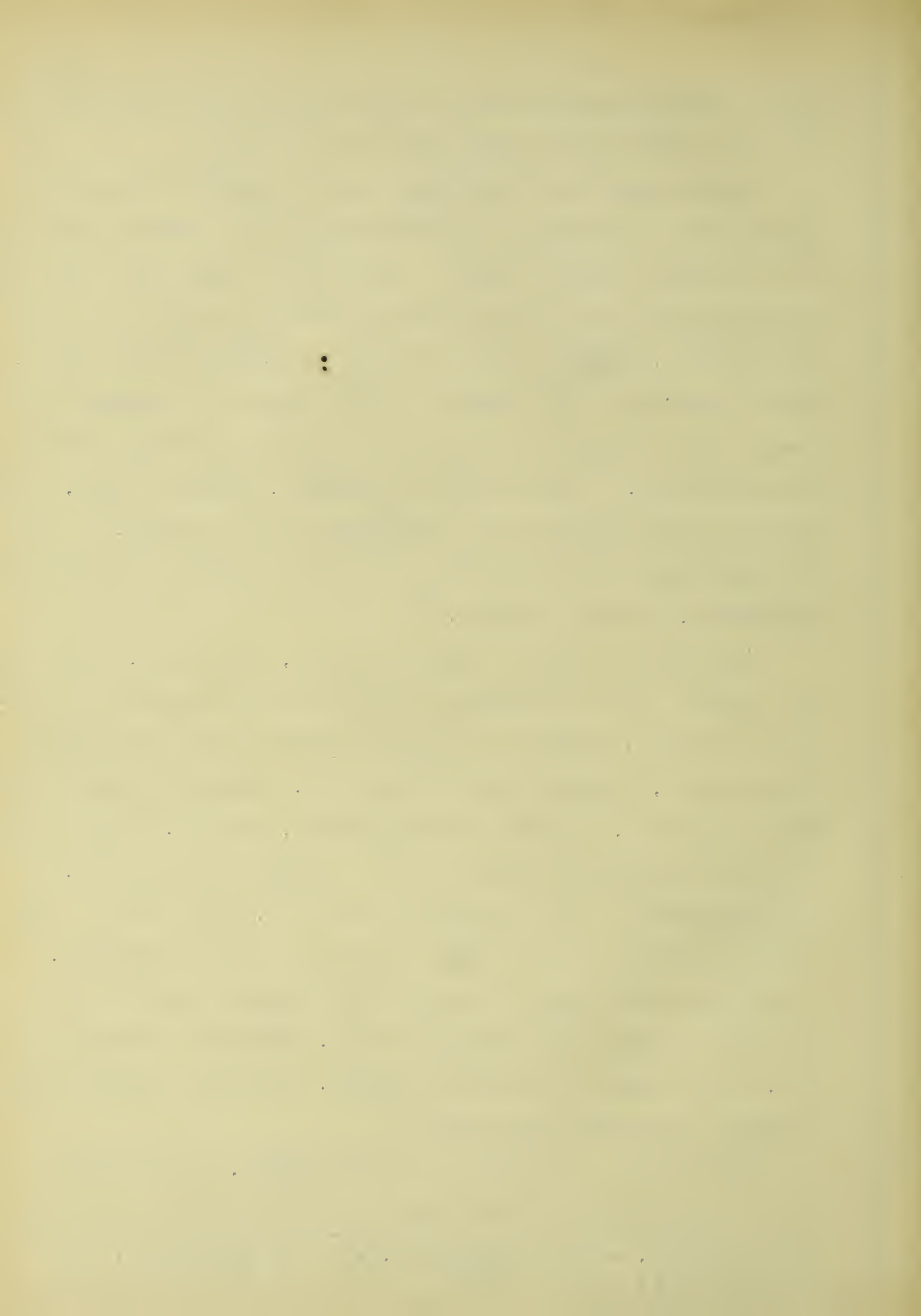
In the quality of humanity he was in advance of his times. He expresses his disgust at the butchery of the mid-day games in the well-known seventh letter. There is one suggestion that the disgust springs from fastidiousness as well as from pity. "Quia occidit ille, meruit ut hoc pateretur ; tu quid meruisti miser, ut hoc spectes?"<sup>1</sup> His attitude toward slaves was extremely humane. Not only did he not abuse them; he even admitted them to his friendship. "Vive cum servo clementer, comiter quoque, et in sermonem illum admitte et in consilium et in convictum."<sup>2</sup> "Non est quod amicum tantum in foro et in curia quaeras: si diligenter adtenderis, et domi invenies."<sup>3</sup>

There was in Seneca a social instinct, as it were, which made him realize the brotherhood of all men and the necessity of living for others. "Nec me ulla res delectabit, licet sit eximia et salutaris, quam mihi uni sciturus sum. Si cum hac exceptione detur sapientia, ut illam inclusam teneam, reiciam. Nullius boni sine socio incunda possessio est."<sup>4</sup> "Alteri vivas oportet, si vis tibi vivere."<sup>5</sup> "Non continuo sibi vivit, qui nemini."<sup>6</sup> The following sounds as if it might belong to the New Testament. "Omne hoc, quod vides, quo divina atque humana conclusa sunt, unum est: membra sumus corporis magni. Natura nos cognatos edidit, cum ex isdem et in eadem gigneret. Ex illius constitutione miserius est nocere quam laedi."<sup>7</sup>

Before passing judgment on a man's faults, it is well to know his own attitude toward them. The subject of our inquiry

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(1) Epistle 7, -5. (2) Epistle 47, -13. (3) Epistle 14, -16.  
 (4) Epistle 6, -4. (5) Epistle 47, -2. (6) Epistle 55, -5.  
 (7) Epistle 25, -52.



possessed in large measure the Christian virtue of humility. To be sure, there is one statement concerning his literary fame which does not sound modest. "Habebo apud posteros gratiam, possum mecum duratura nomina educere."<sup>1</sup> This self-praise, however, was common to the world of his day and is more than outweighed by his other remarks about himself. He treats those with sick minds not as a physician, but as a sufferer in the same ward, when all are searching for the common cure. "Non sum tam improbus ut curationes aeger obeam, sed, tamquam in eodem valetudinario iaceam, de communi tecum malo colloquor et remedia communico."<sup>2</sup> He confesses that he is far from the perfect "sapiens" which he holds up as a model. "Quod argumentum est ista, quae probo, quae laudo, nondum habere certam sedem et immobilem.---Parum adhuc profeci."<sup>3</sup> "Non de me loquor, qui multum ab homine tolerabili nedum a perfecto, absum."<sup>4</sup> "Non possum scire an ei profuturus sim, quem admoneo: illud scio, alicui me profuturum, si multos admonuero."<sup>5</sup> "Intellego---me transfigurari. Nec hoc promitto, nihil in me superesse, quod mutandum sit. Hoc ipsum argumentum est in melius translatis animi, quod vitia sua videt."<sup>6</sup> With the last statement we quite agree.

The question of Seneca's sincerity is an important one. In this thesis we can judge of this as of other qualities, only by his own words. Many brand him as insincere because, though a preacher of moderation, he had possessed a large fortune and great political power. A possible explanation is found in the following statement which he makes. "Pecunia venit ultro, honor offeretur, gratia ac dignitas fortasse ingerentur tibi."<sup>7</sup> He appears to have realized

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(1) Epistle 21, -5. (2) Epistle 27, -1. (3) Epistle 87, -4,5.  
 (4) Epistle 57, -3. (5) Epistle 29, -2. (6) Epistle 6, -1.  
 (7) Epistle 76, -6.



the relative value of words and deeds. "Philosophia non in verbis sed in rebus est."<sup>1</sup> "Non est beatus qui scit illa, sed qui facit."<sup>2</sup> Harmony is the ideal. "Concordet sermo cum vita."<sup>3</sup>

(1) Epistle 16, -3. (2) Epistle 75, -7. (3) Epistle 75, -4.





## III. CONCLUSION

From the suggestions concerning Seneca's personal qualities and habits of life which are contained in his "Letters to Lucilius", we are able to form some idea of the man as he was at the time when he wrote them. We think of him as a physically inactive old man, retired from public life, living in comparative simplicity, and devoting what remained of his life to essays on philosophy and to helpful intercourse with friends. In that intercourse he reveals himself as intensely human, even though he holds up his Stoicism, by habit, perhaps to shield himself. He is not without humor; much would be inconsistent with his deep moral purpose. He has sympathy for the race, as his creed requires, but his long political experience was a conscious or unconscious agent in his appeal to the favored few. In this respect he is but the representation of his time. Yet his sympathy is so far catholic that it was probably one of the reasons for the claim of the early Christians that Seneca was "noster". Almost Christian also are the statements about God and about himself, revealing reverence and humility. We could wish him more vigorous in condemnation of the brutalizing sports of his age, yet even here he is as far advanced as the educated Roman of his time. We note with approval the glimpses of his family life. His idea of happiness is not that of the mass, but of the scholar. His work shows a happy combination of respect for Stoic predeces-



sors, breadth of mind, and independence of thought. He is not faultless: he humbly confesses his lapses of self control, and is unable to conceal the fact that he is sometimes afraid of Nero. But the qualities which stand out are those which contribute most to his greatness,- sympathy, tireless missionary zeal, and a realization of the brotherhood of man which makes him call all "members of one body".

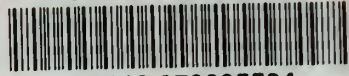








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